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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001889

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TAGS: PBTS PGOV PINS PTER I2 TU IR

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON BORDER INCIDENTS AND PKK PRESENCE IN DOHUK PROVINCE, IRAQI KURDISTAN

REF: BAGHDAD 1391

Classified By: Classified by D/RRT APatterson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) This is an RRT Erbil Reporting Cable

¶2. (C) SUMMARY: Iraqi military leaders in Dohuk Province request additional resources from the Iraqi central government and the USG to cover the Iraq-Turkey border area in Dohuk Province. They cite 22 instances of Turkish military action in Dohuk Province from May 3 to 29. Iraqi border guard chief said Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) cells do not carry out military movements and can be removed if ordered by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense (MOD), the Multi-National Forces ) Iraq (MNF-I) and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). END SUMMARY.

¶3. (C) On June 4, RRT Offs met with General Salaam Faqi, Head of the Provincial Joint Coordination Committee (PJCC), and Colonel Hussein Tamer, Chief of Dohuk Province Border Patrol, Department of Border Enforcement (DBE), Iraqi Ministry of Interior. They are Kurdish members of the Iraqi armed forces and not Peshmerga.

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RESOURCE NEEDS  
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¶4. (C) The PJCC and DBE Chiefs said despite the security handover to the KRG by MNF-I and the Korean army on May 30, the Regional Iraqi Control, the KRG still needs US military and civilian assistance.

¶5. (C) Colonel Hussein cited the lack of staff and equipment to safeguard the 225 kilometer area of Dohuk Province which borders Turkey. He added that out of the 958 DBE guards, 807 require weapons. The DBE Chief said he also needed uniforms, 60 vehicles (tankers, road clearing vehicles) and 3,000 more staff including support staff to bring his operation up to full capacity. Due to lack of resources, night patrols, he noted, have ceased and there are sections in the mountainous border area which are not inspected.

¶6. (C) There are 16 border stations in Dohuk Province whereas 49 were planned for construction, Colonel Hussein remarked. He emphasized that due to a lack of hardened border guard compounds, the Peshmerga handed over to the DBE five of their stations to operate from.

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TURKISH MILITARY ACTIONS INSIDE DOHUK PROVINCE  
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¶7. (C) The DBE and PJCC Chiefs stated that for the period May 3-29, 22 Turkish army actions were carried out two to three kilometers inside the Iraqi Kurdistan border in Dohuk Province (reftel).

¶ 8. (C) The PJCC and DBE Chiefs said since 1997, the Turkish military have carried out actions in the border areas inside Dohuk Province. Usually during the winter months, the Turkish soldiers return to Turkey, they added. General Salaam mentioned that there is no announcement from the Turkish military advising of the time or place of such actions. (NOTE: The Turkish military has notified MNF-I of their spring deployments inside Iraq since 2003. This year, we suggested the Department request Embassy Ankara to ask the Turkish government to also notify the GOI of their deployments. See Reftel). He acknowledged a recent and unusual increase in Turkish forces in Dohuk Province but provided no figures or objective behind the change.

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PKK REMOVAL: A POLITICAL DECISION  
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¶ 9. (C) Colonel Hussein also confirmed that since October 1992 the PKK has a presence inside the border area of Dohuk Province near the Turkish border. He underscored that the DBE forces have no relation and no communication with PKK members. The DBE Chief said that the PKK in Dohuk Province do not carry out military maneuvers and do not constitute a threat to the Iraqi army. In terms of their organization, training, and equipment, the PKK has not changed over the last few years, he continued, and when confronted, appear fearful of the Iraqi army. He said their presence in the KRG and in Turkey is political and used as a justification for the Government of Turkey to secure resources for the Turkish army.

¶ 10. (C) The PJCC and DBE Chiefs agreed that military

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intervention to remove the PKK would require a political decision by the Iraqi MOD, the KRG, and MNF-I. They affirmed that, militarily, the removal of the PKK, if ordered, would not be problematic because there are only 500 PKK members in the Dohuk Province border area. (Note: General Salaam estimated the more realistic level of 700-800 in reftel. This estimate is supported by other Kurdish military and political sources.)

¶ 11. (C) COMMENT: The two generals provided us with mixed messages: while they say that they can handle the PKK militarily if so ordered, they also want significant new border security resources. Also, while they say that the failure to remove the PKK from the border region is the result of a political decision, top KRG officials have repeatedly told RRTOFFS that they are against the PKK presence in Iraqi Kurdistan. It remains unclear therefore if elimination of the PKK in Dohuk Province stems from a lack of border guards and equipment. The KRG may also be using the PKK as a justification to seek resources for their security forces. If the PKK is not a significant threat, then one possibility is that the KRG is seeking better border security capabilities to monitor and deter Turkish incursions. END

COMMENT  
CROCKER